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MESSAGE

OF

HIS EXCELLENCY

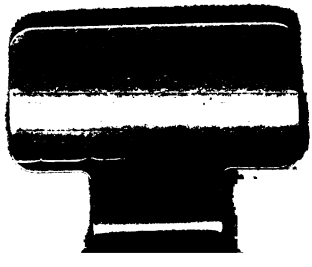
PHINEAS C. LOUNSBURY,

GOVERNOR OF CONNECTICUT,

TO THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

SESSION OF 1887.



MESSAGE

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SESSION OF 1887.

HARTFORD, CONN.:
PRESS OF THE CASE, LOCKWOOD & BRAINARD COMPANY.
1887.

MESSAGE.

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the General Assembly:

I greet you as men to whom, by the suffrages of a free people, has been committed the supreme power in the State, a power limited only by the Constitution itself. The prerogative of legislation, with all its honor and with all its responsibility, is yours. It is you who command, it is I who execute; but whether it be ours to declare the will of the people or simply in a lower sphere to fulfill it, I trust that we shall know no ambition except to faithfully serve the Commonwealth.

STATE FINANCES.

The finances of the State are in a highly satisfactory condition. At the beginning of the present fiscal year, that is, on the first day of last July, the funded debt of the State was four millions two hundred and seventy-one thousand and two hundred dollars ($4,271,200). Of this debt, bonds bearing interest at the rate of five per cent., and amounting to one million and thirty thousand dollars ($1,030,000), are due May first, 1897, but are redeemable at the pleasure of the State after the first of next May. I recommend that these bonds be paid as soon as they become redeemable, and that funds for this purpose be provided by the issue of new bonds bearing interest at the rate of three per cent., and payable thirty years from date. Such bonds could doubtless be sold at a premium, and no one can question the wisdom of a just legislation which will save to the State more than twenty thousand dollars a year. It seems right that upon the next generation should fall the burden of the final payment of this part of a debt which was so largely incurred in preserving and handing down to posterity the institutions which came to us from the

Fathers. This duty the people of the next generation will not only gladly meet, but they will remember with gratitude the wise legislation, the personal integrity and the self-sacrifice which will have made for them the burden so little. The large balance of cash in the Treasury at the beginning of the last fiscal year, was owing to the then recent sale of new bonds, which had been issued for the purpose of paying that portion of the State debt which was then maturing. The decrease in cash, as shown at the end of the year, suggests no change in legislation. The important and significant facts are, that at the close of the last fiscal year the cash on hand was two hundred and thirty thousand four hundred and forty-two dollars and forty-eight cents ($230,442.48), and that during that year the ordinary receipts of the Treasury exceeded its disbursement, for ordinary expenses, by more than three hundred thousand dollars.

For the year ending the thirtieth of last June, there came into the Treasury through the ordinary sources of revenue, the sum of one million eight hundred and thirteen thousand seven hundred and one dollars and seventy-eight cents ($1,813,701.78). Of the items that made up this amount the principal ones were as follows:

Received in taxes from the towns, four hundred and thirty-seven thousand four hundred and seventy-one dollars and sixty-nine cents ($437,471.69); in taxes from railroad companies, six hundred and twenty-six thousand one hundred and ninety-nine dollars and forty-nine cents ($626,199.49); in taxes from mutual insurance companies, two hundred and twenty-five thousand four hundred and eighty-four dollars and fourteen cents ($225,484.14); in taxes from savings banks, two hundred thousand five hundred and ninety dollars and sixty-one cents ($200,590.61); in taxes from military subjects, one hundred and two thousand four hundred and seventy-two dollars and ten cents ($102,472.10); and in taxes from non-resident stockholders, seventy-one thousand five hundred and forty-nine dollars and forty-six cents ($71,549.46).

During the same year, there was paid out from the Treas-

ury for ordinary expenses (including the interest on the State debt) the sum of one million five hundred and eleven thousand six hundred and ninety-seven dollars and fifty-two cents ($1,511,697.52). Of this sum, the principal items were as follows:

Paid out for judicial expenses, two hundred and forty-one thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight dollars and thirty-one cents ($241,838.31); for common schools (not including the amount paid from the School Fund), two hundred and thirty-two thousand six hundred and seventy-one dollars ($232,671); for humane institutions, one hundred and seventy-three thousand nine hundred and six dollars and five cents ($173,906.05); for sessions of the last General Assembly, one hundred and six thousand and five dollars and seventy-one cents ($106,005.71); for the National Guard, ninety-nine thousand three hundred and ninety-four dollars and sixty-three cents ($99,394.63); for board of prisoners in county jails, eighty-one thousand one hundred and eight dollars and eighty-three cents ($81,108.83); for State Reform School, fifty-eight thousand nine hundred and nineteen dollars and forty cents ($58,919.40); and for interest on State bonds, one hundred and ninety-nine thousand two hundred and forty-six dollars and seventy-eight cents ($199,246.78).

The extraordinary expenses of the present fiscal year will be considerable. They will mainly result from the building of the new armories and from the enlargement and the improvement of the State Prison. These expenses were authorized by the last General Assembly and provision was made to meet them by an increase to two mills of the tax on the towns. As this provision was ample, you will doubtless deem it safe, and therefore wise, to reduce this tax, for the coming year, to the previous rate of a mill and a quarter.

MILITARY AFFAIRS.

I commend to your careful perusal, the report of the Adjutant-General of the State. The National Guard is now composed of twenty-two hundred and forty-four (2244) officers

and men. Though small in numbers, its efficiency is such as to promise ample protection in any emergency that is likely to arise. Its discipline and appearance are matters of State pride and praise.

Before the close of the present year, a new and neat uniform will have been furnished to the entire Guard, and that, too, without any extra appropriation from the State. You will fully appreciate the ability and the care which have accomplished these results, when you consider that the military tax fully meets all the ordinary expenses of the National Guard.

The last Legislature authorized the building of new armories at New Britain and Norwalk, and the purchase of the one occupied at Hartford, with the condition that the total expenditure should not exceed the sum of one hundred thousand dollars($100,000.00). Contracts effecting these objects have already been made and involve a total expenditure of about ninety-two thousand dollars ($92,000.00), a saving to the Treasury of the State of eight thousand dollars ($8,000.00).

WAR RECORDS.

The last General Assembly authorized the compiling of a new catalogue of Connecticut Volunteers in the War of the Rebellion, and the procuring from the General Government of the records of service of Connecticut soldiers in the previous wars of the Nation.

Satisfactory progress has been made in this work, and records of great value, as evidence or reference, are becoming the property of the State.

AGRICULTURE.

The different agricultural institutions supported in whole or in part by State appropriation, are working together in harmony, and seem to be doing all that could reasonably be expected. The Secretary of the Board of Agriculture reports that the question of the title to the Storrs School property has been satisfactorily settled. Since the last report, the

Agricultural Experiment Station has been largely engaged in the examination of commercial fertilizers and feeding stuffs, and in the analysis of what was suspected to be imitation butter; a suspicion which, in most of the cases, proved to be well founded. Imitation may not always be deception, but deception in matters of food is invariably fraud, and in this analysis and detection, the Station has done excellent and needed work, for frauds in food touch the very life of the people.

It is probable that for some of the agricultural institutions of the State you will be asked to vote increased appropriations. The odium of class legislation cannot justly fall on any action of yours that shall be wisely exerted to throw needed light on a pursuit, the prosperity of which forms the basis of all other pursuits. In what direction, and to what extent, State aid should be given, many and perhaps most of you, from your calling in life, are specially fitted to know. Your action will follow intelligent and free discussion, and the soundness of your conclusions cannot well be doubted.

BANKS.

The Bank Commissioners report that there are now eighty-five savings banks in the State, an increase of one from last year, and that the general condition of these banks is better than it has ever been before. The investments are believed to be uniformly good, and the general management of the banks to be beyond just criticism.

On the first day of last October, the total amount of deposits in all the savings banks of the State was ninety-seven millions four hundred and twenty-four thousand eight hundred and twenty dollars and eighty-five cents ($97,424,820.85), an increase during the year of nearly five millions of dollars. At the same date the total number of depositors was two hundred and sixty-six thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight (266,888), an increase in the year of ten thousand seven hundred and ninety-one (10,791). More than two-fifths of the whole population of this State

are depositors in these banks, a fact which not only strikingly proves the thrift of the people, but also attests their approval of past legislation, and their confidence that their savings thus deposited will continue to be jealously guarded by the State.

There should be no abatement in the demand that safety in investment and economy in expenses should mark the management of every one of these institutions. There is no evidence that there is any tendency to recklessness in the one respect, or to extravagance in the other.

There seems to be no present need of further bank legislation. If any be proposed, you will give it that full consideration which its importance requires.

INSURANCE.

Within the last year, the Charter Oak Life Insurance Company has been placed in the hands of receivers. The Insurance Commissioner states that in his annual report to the General Assembly, he will give more extended information concerning this failure, and that he will make some suggestions in relation to some of our insurance laws. In the general condition of the other insurance companies, no marked change will be shown.

On January first, 1886, there were in the State ten stock fire insurance companies with paid-up capital amounting to nearly eleven millions of dollars, with gross assets of more than twenty five millions, and with a surplus above all liabilities of nearly seven millions of dollars. The number of mutual fire insurance companies was sixteen, with assets of one million two hundred and seventy thousand dollars, and with a surplus above all liabilities of nine hundred and seventy-four thousand dollars. The number of life insurance companies was nine, with gross assets of more than one hundred and ten millions of dollars, and with liabilities (except capital) of ninety-eight millions of dollars. You see the vast interests which our insurance laws affect, and in large degree control, and you will realize the great responsibility which the

State owes to the policy-holders. There is little doubt that our insurance companies as a rule are managed by upright and capable men. There is no doubt that all new legislation touching these companies, should be begun with caution, and adopted only after the most patient and thorough consideration.

RAILROADS.

The Commissioners report that there is continued improvement in the general condition of all the railroads in the State.

The freight and passenger traffic, the gross earnings, and the net earnings have all largely increased.

The number of passengers carried was nineteen millions eleven thousand three hundred and eighty-one, and of these only five were fatally injured. The accidents at highway crossings were less than usual, and resulted in nine deaths as compared with fourteen the year before. The number of regular Sunday trains has increased, but the number of Sunday excursions has diminished.

Any legislation which does not interfere with acts of necessity or mercy, which guarantees undisturbed worship of God to those who choose to worship, and Sunday rest to as many as possible of the railroad employees in the State, is right in itself, and will meet with public approval.

CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS.

In the founding and support of her charitable institutions, the State is performing a duty which is just as binding upon her, as it is to provide troops and arms for her own defense. Protection is, of course, the primary object of government, but the same elements of enlightened human nature that call into existence a Christian State, demand that that State shall give a Christian care to all those unfortunate ones that are beyond the reach of common private charity. To all the humane institutions of the State you will surely give a generous and cheerful support. It is wise charity when you vote

every dollar that is needed. It is true economy when you see that every dollar that you vote is so directed by wisdom and honesty that it carries its full measure of help to the object for which it was intended.

On the 30th of last June the number of patients in the Connecticut Hospital for the Insane was eleven hundred and forty-six, an increase from the previous year of one hundred and twenty-seven. The number of new patients admitted during the year was three hundred and sixty-one, and the number of removals by death or discharge was two hundred and thirty-four. The wing completing the new South Hospital building has been finished at a cost less than the sum appropriated, and the balance of two thousand dollars ($2,000.00) has been returned to the State Treasury.

The trustees make sorrowful mention of the death of Dr. Shew, who for twenty years from the opening of the hospital had been its superintendent, and to whose executive ability and worthiness of public confidence the institution was largely indebted for its success. The vacancy thus made has been filled by the appointment of Dr. James Olmsted, who for ten years had been first assistant physician in the Hospital, and who is believed to be well qualified for the office. The revenue derived from the board of the patients is enough for all the ordinary expenses of the Hospital, and the trustees ask for no special appropriation, but they do ask that you order the insane convicts to be cared for at Wethersfield, and not at Middletown. If it is true that insane persons, as a rule, retain their individual characteristics, and if insane convicts are no exception to this rule, the question comes to you, whether it is wise to associate the work of a prison with that of an asylum. It is not a matter of convenience or of expense. It is a question of humanity, and I commend it to your prompt and careful investigation.

For the purpose of providing accommodations for one hundred and fifty more of the sick and indigent soldiers of the late war, the last Legislature appropriated fifteen thousand dollars ($15,000.00) for the enlargement of Fitch's Home at

Darien. This enlargement is now virtually completed, and gives room for more than two hundred additional inmates. Many disabled veterans now cared for in various hospitals at a cost to the State in each case of six dollars ($6.00) a week, can soon be transferred to the Home at a saving of nearly one-half the present expense.

REFORMATORY INSTITUTIONS.

The reformatory institutions of the State stand and ought to stand side by side with those of milder name, for it is none the less true charity, because, in their management, back of the kind hand of sympathy is the strong arm of repression and guidance. That was a keen statesman who first conceived the plan of an institution that should stop the boy on the high road to prison, and, before he could become a hardened criminal, draw him aside into the broad and busy field of useful citizenship. Such institutions cost; but their net benefit to the State, even in dollars and cents, no man has yet computed. Intelligent selfishness and unselfish charity alike forbid that the withering hand of a false retrenchment should ever touch either the Reform or the Industrial School.

On the first day of July last, the number of boys in the State Reform School was four hundred and forty-seven, an increase of thirty-four as compared with the previous year. The number of boys received during the year was two hundred and thirty-eight, and the number discharged was two hundred and four. The trustees report that the buildings are in good repair, that the general condition of the school is highly satisfactory and shows marked improvement, that the boys are well fed, well clothed, and well taught, and that a large proportion of them when they leave the school will undoubtedly become respectable citizens. The officers believe that this proportion would be increased if the cottage system could be extended. This system permits the division of the boys into classes or grades, according to their different degrees of moral perversity, keeps each one of these grades free from the corrupting influence of those that are worse,

makes possible the use of different rules and modes of discipline, and so increases the chances of final reformation. The three cottages that already have been built accommodate one hundred and fifty boys, or about one-third of the whole number, and the great superiority of the system is evident to every visitor of the school. In the cottages the boys are contented, for their life is more homelike, and even to a wayward boy, in his better moments, there is no place like home. The cottage plan has been adopted in many places, and without exception works admirably. In the hope that you will authorize the speedy building of, at least, one more cottage, I commend the matter to your favorable attention.

The trustees ask that the allowance for the board and maintenance of each boy be raised from two dollars and a quarter, to two dollars and fifty cents a week. They say that this increase is needed to meet the expenses of the institution, and that if it is not made they must call for an extra appropriation of at least six thousand dollars. It is a well established business principle, that from an income known and steady and uniform, better results can be obtained than from a like sum received in irregular amounts and at uncertain times. I therefore recommend that the desired increase be granted, rather than that a special appropriation be voted to meet a deficiency which must be constantly arising.

STATE PRISON.

The State Prison directors report that the work for the enlargement and improvement of the prison is going on, and, that when it is completed, the State will have substantially a new prison with all the modern improvements, at a cost far less than that of any similar institution in the whole country.

The highest number of convicts confined at any one time during the last year, was three hundred and ten, whereas the new prison will have cells for four hundred and fifty. If it were not true that a righteous administration of justice would rapidly fill up the prison, one might express the hope that there would be no need of its further enlargement for many years to come.

The ordinary expenses of the prison exceeded its income by the sum of two thousand four hundred and one dollars and thirty-two cents ($2,401.32). This deficiency in no way reflects on the management of the institution. The large amount of sickness among the prisoners diminished the income, but the State, from year to year, is getting as much for the labor of its convicts as it has any reason to expect under the present system. The commitments on the average are for so short a time, and there are so many uncertainties connected with convict labor, that no manufacturer will contract for its use except at prices so low as to absolutely ensure his profit. He will not take the ordinary chances of loss and gain. When some wise scheme shall be devised whereby the State can sell at its full value some fit product of the labor of its convicts, instead of the labor itself, and when the demands of justice shall be so heeded that the short sentences of the present courts give place to the longer ones which our criminals richly deserve, two desirable results will follow. That real grievance which is caused by the degrading competition of underpaid convict labor — degrading, not because it is convict, but because it is underpaid — will be abolished, and the income of your prison will exceed all its ordinary and extraordinary expenses by a surplus so large that it will go a long way toward meeting the costs of your criminal courts.

The discipline of the prison has been excellent, and both the warden and his subordinates by their ability and faithfulness have deserved the highest praise.

The directors ask the passage of a law which shall provide that all regular hearings of the Board of Pardons shall be held at the prison in Wethersfield, and not at Hartford. The reasons in favor of such a law are the strong ones of convenience, discipline, and expense, and there would seem to be no well-grounded objection to its passage.

I commend to your most earnest consideration the wise and timely suggestions which the Prison Directors make with reference to the criminal class. These suggestions will bring

to you as a body, the question which no doubt has often come to you as individuals, what is the State Prison for? It was not meant to be an institution of reform, though of course the Christian idea of reform runs all through its management. It was not meant to be even a place of punishment, except so far as the punishment of crime tends to the promotion of law and order. Least of all was it meant to be a house of refuge, to which the habitual criminal could go until the people had forgotten their wrongs and their wrath, and it was safe for him to begin again his career of plunder and violence. The prison will be answering the full purpose of its existence when it gives permanent protection to all good citizens, by shutting up forever within its walls and behind its bolts and bars, the entire criminal class of the State. Is it protection when you unchain the mad dog and let him loose on the playground? Is it protection when you open the door of the cage and let the tiger out into the crowded street? Is it protection when you open the gates of your prison, and out into the peaceful walks of society send forth the hardened criminal, whose brutal instincts have been intensified by confinement, and who has obeyed all the rules of prison life simply that he might the sooner begin again to rob or murder? When you have answered these questions, you will favorably consider the recommendation of your able Board of Directors, and will place upon our statute books a law not less stringent than that of the State of Ohio. Some future Legislature will wisely take a long step beyond this, and will fix the life sentence as the penalty for every crime, the commission of which shall show that the man is already a confirmed criminal.

BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS.

The full and able report of the Labor Commissioner deserves your special attention. The law fixing the limit of child labor at thirteen years is meeting with general approval. Employers, as a rule, favor the law and gladly obey its requirements, but many of the parents, impelled by poverty or

motives of gain, are disposed to evade it. The limit is certainly not set too high, but if a higher standard were to be adopted now it would increase the tendency to ignore the law and might make its enforcement impossible. When you have placed the limit so high and have enforced the law so vigorously that the child's education is secured, it may be well not to try to settle the hard question as to which brings the greater wrong, the exhausting labor of a factory or the hunger and cold of a cheerless home.

The Commissioner recommends the enactment of a statute exempting from attachment the wages of mechanics and laborers. Such a statute would take away that basis of credit which is now furnished by our factorizing laws, would compel the storekeeper to refuse to trust except in cases of undoubted personal character and responsibility, and would tend to bring about weekly payments in all the factories. This would increase the purchasing power of wages, would lessen the losses of the merchants, and, with few exceptions, would cause no hardship to the employers. These desirable results would be accomplished by the operation of natural laws, which enforce themselves without the annoyance, the expense, and the uncertainty of litigation. Surely the employer cannot complain if the State simply removes those obstructions that impede the workings of the natural laws of trade and commerce.

EDUCATION.

At the close of the last fiscal year, the principal of the School Fund amounted to two millions and twenty-two thousand two hundred and four dollars and twenty-seven cents ($2,022,204.27), a loss from the previous year of seven thousand nine hundred and nineteen dollars and forty-seven cents ($7,919.47). A part of this loss came from the foreclosure of certain old mortgages, and the rest was the result of the readjustment of the stock of the City Bank of Hartford. The people of the State feel a natural pride in keeping the capital of the School Fund unimpaired, and any

appropriation made for this purpose would work no injustice to any one, and would probably meet with general approval.

The total amount of money raised in the State during the last year for the support of the common schools, was one million six hundred and sixty-three thousand and nineteen dollars and seventeen cents ($1,663,019.17). Of this sum about seven hundred and fifty-nine thousand dollars ($759,000.00) came from town taxation; about four hundred and forty-eight thousand dollars ($448,000.00) from district taxation; about one hundred and fourteen thousand dollars ($114,000.00) from the earnings of the School Fund; nearly forty-eight thousand dollars ($48,000.00), from the Town Deposit Fund and Local Funds; about two hundred and twenty-eight thousand dollars ($228,000.00) were appropriated by the State; and the balance of about sixty-six thousand dollars ($66,000.00) came from voluntary contributions and other sources.

The number of children between the ages of four and sixteen was one hundred and fifty-two thousand one hundred and sixty-six (152,166). The number of scholars registered in the schools was one hundred and twenty-five thousand five hundred and thirty-nine (125,539), but of these many attended school only a few days, and many more only the sixty days required by the law. The number of the children that did not attend school at all was twenty thousand three hundred and eighty-eight (20,388).

These are the figures and the facts, but no report of your able School Board, no statistics of a census could show the frightful amount of illiteracy that is existing all over the State. Within the last ten years thousands of boys and girls have passed beyond the limit of their school life, have gone out into the world, and to-day they are virtually unable to read and write. These children were not to blame, for they went to school all that they were sent, all perhaps that they were permitted to go. It was a few days in each of a few years. They learned all that they had the time to learn, their letters, to read a few short sentences, to write their

names; but any ordinary printed book is to them a sealed mystery, and any document to which they may sign their names is as far beyond their ability to decipher as though it were written in Sanscrit. For this ignorance, which must darken and sadden all their lives, this Commonwealth is to blame, for it was the inevitable result of faulty legislation and of inefficiency in enforcing that legislation which was good. The number of days of compulsory attendance was set at sixty, when the most that could reasonably have been expected was that some scholars would learn more in sixty days of the year than they would forget in the remaining three hundred. Worse than that, the State failed to lift its strong arm to put into the hands of all its starving children even this poor crust.

The question comes home to you, how can the growth of this illiteracy be checked? Surely it cannot be done by a course which weakens and neglects the back districts. In every center of population you may build a graded school, but this will throw its light for only a mile or two from the village green, and then, if you do nothing more, there is left beyond a wilderness of ignorance denser and darker than it was before. It can be done only by a legislation which cares for every child, and which is enforced, not by local authorities, not by town boards, but by your own State Board with all the dignity and the power of the Commonwealth behind it.

In my judgment, the number of days of compulsory attendance should be increased to one hundred and twenty. No experienced teacher believes that any ordinary child can acquire a reasonably good common school education in less than one hundred and twenty days of continuous schooling in each year. The length of school required by law should also be increased. It is now fixed at twenty-four weeks in the year and many of the districts have no more. In all cases it is resulting in lack of education and many parents are bitterly complaining that the State provides — that is, virtually, permits — only six months of schooling for their children, while the children of their neighbors are enjoying all the advantages